GEOGRAPHIC NEWS BULLETINS

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General Headquarters, Washington, D. C.

Contents for Week of November 30, 1925. Vol. IV. No. 18.

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An Amusement of Young Japan: Playing at being Samurai, Old-time Military Rulers

(See Bulletin No. 2)

HOW TO OBTAIN THE BULLETINS

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Syria: The Hub of Three Continents

EYES of the world have been turned from Morocco recently to Syria, where some severe fighting has taken place.

Whenever anything important happens in Syria it is important to practically all the world. Its part in the spread of Christianity gives Syria a sentimental interest for Christians. Syria's geographical position makes any event there of political importance to Europe, Asia, and Africa.

When the Turkish Empire was finally broken up, Syria was mandated to France with the understanding that it was to take its place in the family of nations as soon as its population was capable of operating a government.

"Syria is the hub of the old world continents," according to a communication to the National Geographic Society by Maynard Owen Williams, "and with every railway that reaches out to Bremen, Baku, Bokhara, Burma, or Bloemfontein, the central region of the world's greatest land-mass achieves new significance.

Syria Has Fortune in Agriculture

"Aside from its importance as a trade route, Syria will find its greatest future as an agricultural nation, and it has extensive regions which can be made to produce large crops. The Hauran, south of Damascus, has long been a granary and the massive ruins of Baalbek dominate a plain whose fertility was once sufficient to make possible lavish local expenditures and at the same time return large taxes to imperial Rome, which used Syria not as a sinking place for public funds, but as a source of revenue for the treasury on the Tiber. When Rome ruled, this remote province had enough and to spare; but not for long did golden eggs from Syria enrich the greedy Turk.

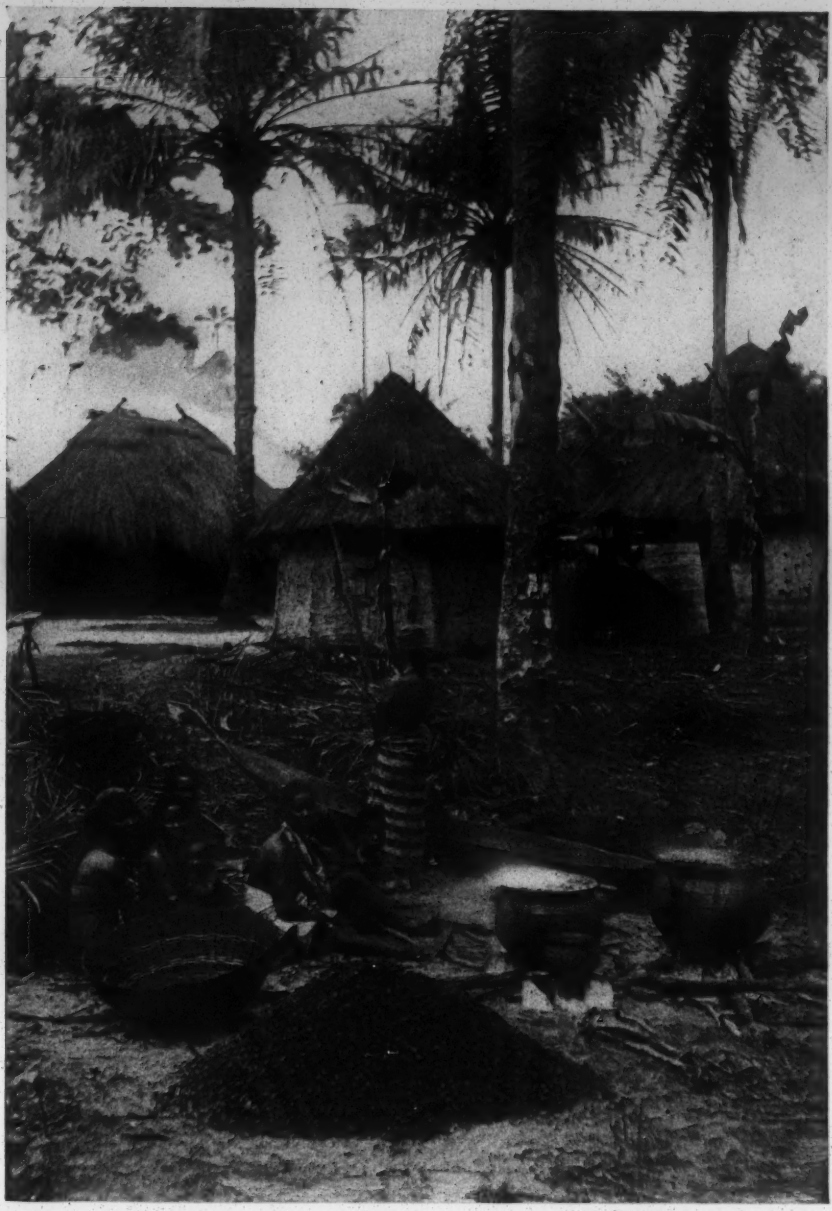
"As an industrial land, Syria faces two possibilities. The cooperation between different parts of the country, which good government will make possible and which good communications will foster, will tend toward an expansion of industry and the establishment of factories to take the place of the household production which has hitherto been the rule.

Water Is Dictator in Syria

"But this very development may rob the larger output of that individuality which has made the rugs, the brasswork, the silk and linen products of Syria much desired by those who appreciate originality of design and perfection of finish. There is today one fairly large brasswork factory in Damascus, where tiny children hammer silver or copper wire into the engraved designs on the pitchers, basins, and trays of Damascene ware, but in almost no other case has industry risen above the stage of family production, which, though slow, insures distinctive products.

"Water holds a high place, not only in the view of the abstemious Mohammedan, but of the Syrian Christian as well. The main attraction of the Damascus café is a tiny fountain, whose sight and sound delight the son of the desert.

"Water bounds Syria on the west. The lack of it defines the eastern and southern boundaries. Many of the most pleasing pages of the Bible ripple with the songs of running brooks or praise the 'still waters' of wells which have long marked the resting places of weary flocks and heavy-laden caravans.



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AN OLD INDUSTRY IN LIBERIA

Native women boil nuts in a cauldron to extract palm oil. This method produces the clearest oil, but many natives use the easier method of storing the palm nuts in a hole in the ground and waiting until the oil leaves the nut by decomposition of the husk (See Bulletin No. 4).

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Fireflies, Crickets and a Japanese Legend

"BURNING the midnight oil" is the familiar figure of speech of the American student for hard work on school assignments.

"Hotaru no hikari mado no yuki" is a Japanese phrase for the same idea. Translated this is "firefly light and window snow," which means nothing in particular when it stands alone. But every Japanese schoolboy and schoolgirl links "firefly light and window snow" with a legend which will remind every American schoolboy and schoolgirl of the story of Abraham Lincoln doing his arithmetic on the back of a shovel by the light of a log fire.

An Ingenious Light

There lived in Japan a very poor family, as poor in their nation as Abraham Lincoln's father and foster mother were in Illinois. They were blessed with a son who had great eagerness for learning. But the poor parents could not afford to send their son to school. They could not buy candles that he might study at night. So the boy collected fireflies from the fields, imprisoning them in a cage. By crowding this curious lantern close to his borrowed books he could make out the characters. Winter came, snuffing out his firefly lantern, but he learned to hold his book where it caught the dim light reflected by snow against the window. Study and work brought him honor and success.

Today when a Japanese student wishes to remark about a fellow student "burning the midnight oil," he says that he is using "firefly light and window snow."

Ready Market for Fireflies and Crickets

Fireflies and crickets are always popular merchandise at temple festivals. A "midway" of booths selling toys and flowers, gewgaws and games is the main attraction at these celebrations. To buy a firefly one joins a milling crowd in the temple park at night under the soft varicolored gleam from hundreds of lanterns. Every gaudy stall in the lane seems an oversize lantern cut away on one side to flood the passing throng with light.

The firefly bazaar itself is like nothing else in the world. Innumerable tiny, straw-ribbed paper cages breathe in darkness and expel glow in slow pulsations. Among his fireflies the merchant stands like an idling leader of an orchestra of lights which seem ever to be tuning for a grand symphony of illumination that never comes off. Each of these truly magic lanterns costs only a fraction of a cent.

A Cricket With a Bell Song

Before one sees the cricket booth one hears it. A miniature storm of noise rises above the murmur of conversation. Elbow your way to the front of the crowd and it will soon be apparent that crickets are not all just crickets. Sweet singers among the crickets come high just as particularly melodious canaries command a good price in the Occident. There is the weaver cricket whose whirring tune is the sound of a hand loom. Another shrills like an electric bell heard in the distance. But this is not the true "suzumushi" or bell cricket. The "suzumushi" song is that of jingling tiny bells Shinto priestesses use in sacred dances.

A Link Between the Nile and Mesopotamia

"In the Lebanon there are scores of springs or rivers gushing forth direct from the rock. The whole countryside facing the Mediterranean suggests the passage of a miracle-working Moses, practicing in these glorious dells the more difficult feat he was to perform in parched Sinai.

"When the early inhabitants of Syria wanted to express gustatory delight, they could not speak of ambrosia and nectar, for their God was free from appetites; but they chose two articles of human diet and expressed deliciousness by saying that a land flowed with milk and honey. That was in the days when bees, rather than beets, furnished the sweetening. In the Lebanon, two springs, the Honey Spring and the Milk Spring, are the sources of Dog River, from whose clear, cold waters busy Beirut is now refreshed.

"Syria closes the east end of the Mediterranean and is bounded on the north by the Taurus Mountains. The Syrian and Arabian deserts limit further settlement to the east and south. But in connection with world commerce it has always been closely related to the fertile valleys of the Nile and the twin Mesopotamian rivers.

"The Haifa Railway separates northern Syria from the southern part, which has long been called Palestine. Haifa is of importance because it is the southernmost Syrian harbor capable of large development and is the terminus of the railway which is becoming the key to Jerusalem as well as the more important line to Damascus and Mesopotamia. It is the real prize of the Near East, for once more it is to become the greatest port of the eastern Mediterranean littoral, as it was when it served as the chief landing place of the Crusaders and the transshipment point of the Venetian, Pisan, and Genoese trade from argosy to caravan.

Bulletin No. 1, November 30, 1925.

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HOW THE ROADS COME TO ANTIOCH IN NORTHERN SYRIA

Much of the trade of northern Syria comes to a focus at the four-arched bridge across the Orontes at Antioch. The best of the roads leads to the right and is the surfaced highway to Alexandretta. The road to the left leads to Seleucia, the ancient port of Antioch on the Mediterranean, now practically ruins. This view is taken from Mount Silpius, at the foot of which the city is crowded (See Bulletin No.).

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Cape Verde Islands: Inevitable Airplane Station

ONCE AGAIN the Cape Verde Islands are host to aviators. They were the second landing place of the Lisbon-to-Brazil flyers in 1922. Now they are again the landing place for the Italian flyers who are making a flight from Genoa to Buenos Aires.

Which all goes to show that, whatever else may be said about Cape Verde Islands, they are certain to be an important station in any future air route from Europe to South America.

The man who travels much usually cards his memory indices with a series of superlatives. He must have replies for the chance inquirer who fires questions broadside:

"What is your favorite mountain?"

"What is the most beautiful view you ever saw?"

Therefore we may take with a grain of salt the opinion of at least one travel writer that the Cape Verde Islands, second landing place of the Lisbon-to-Brazil flyers, is "the most uninteresting place I have visited."

Their Single Superlative

According to this authority, "the Cape Verde Archipelago is the place of all I have yet seen best suited to the treatment of the old time school geography. You can tell that it consists of an archipelago of ten inhabited islands, and others on which human beings have so far had better judgment than to settle; that it lies 300 miles west of Cape Verde, Africa, and point out that it took its name from the aforesaid cape, which the youthful reader probably could be left to guess for himself; that all the islands are volcanoes, that there is a rainy season followed by epidemics, but that if the rainy season does not arrive, as has been the case on some of the islands, famine precedes the epidemic—and there you have the story."

It is true that the Cape Verde Islands do not compare with the exquisite Canaries, first landing place of the airmen, in beauty, human interest, animal life, or soft breezes. Travelers pass them by. Baedeker ignores them. Yet, now that they are taking on new importance as an aerial halting place, the islands may be rescued from innocuous obscurity.

A Service Station for Ships

The naturalist would find on one of the islands a seabird unknown elsewhere and a plant-eating lizard. The student of economic geography would be interested to work out the reason why the inhabitants of one of the group, Brava, have developed a land-owning propensity which leads them into constant legal wrangles, while a spirit of "come what may" and indifference to ownership of anything infests the other islands.

Less than a century ago Sao Vincente had only a hundred people; today it is the commerce center of a group. And there must be a fascinating story anent the Englishman who founded a coaling station in a place where you have to import water, wood and food, and made it a busy little spot very far off the main streets of Atlantic traffic.

The attraction of crickets for light makes their capture easy by countrymen with lanterns. Male and female are usually imprisoned at the same time since Cricket's wife is always close by. But mankind is ruthless with these family ties; the male is immediately separated from the female, for he alone sings. Placed in company with his mate he ceases to sing and soon dies. His silent partner is kept for breeding purposes.

What to Feed a Cricket

Breeding crickets are placed in crocks half filled with moist clay. The male dies first and the female lives only until her eggs are laid. Left to the normal course the eggs hatch about the middle of July. But merchants incubate crickets for the early spring trade in warm rooms. A cheap diet of eggplant parings, melon rind, cucumber rind or the soft interior parts of the white onion satisfies the singing crickets.

Musical frogs also delight the heart of the Japanese. Certain places in the vicinity of Tokyo are well known and often visited in the evening by people who love to listen to a certain species of small frog whose song is highly esteemed.

Bulletin No. 2, November 30, 1925.

Form for Renewal of Bulletin Requests

Many requests for the GEOGRAPHIC NEWS BULLETINS were made for the year ending with this issue. If you desire the Bulletins continued kindly notify the Society promptly. The attached form may be used:

School Service Department,
National Geographic Society,
Washington, D. C.

Kindly send.....copies of the GEOGRAPHIC NEWS BULLETINS for the school year beginning with the issue of....., for classroom use, to

Name.....

Address for sending Bulletins.....

City.....State.....

I am a teacher in.....school.....grade.

Enclose 25 cents for each annual subscription.

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Education to Go With Rubber Into Liberia

EDUCATION is to join industry in pioneer work in Liberia, the African negro republic planned by Americans as a place for the repatriation of slaves.

On the heels of the announcement that American interests have decided to give Liberia a future in rubber, come the plans for a broad educational and social project in the African Republic.

For some fifty or sixty miles back of its coast Liberia has been cleared and partly developed, but from that imaginary line inland there are dense forests and extremely primitive peoples. Sir Harry Johnston encountered beasts, birds and reptiles there, which, he writes, "are found fossil in Miocene formations of France and southern Germany."

Two Roads Total 55 Miles in Length

It would be safe to assume that local demand would never bring about the development of the country's rubber resources, for there are only two roads, one of them extending from Monrovia, the capital, fifty miles back into the country, and the other a short stretch of five miles inland from Cape Palmas. There is not a single mile of railroad. Native porters, balancing huge loads on their heads, are the only means by which the products of the interior can be brought to the coast.

However, the potential wealth of the country should not be overlooked. Although Liberia, located as it is on the point where the west coast makes the great bend to form the Gulf of Guinea, does not stand out very prominently against the great bulk of the African continent, it has an area equal to that of Kentucky, and a total population estimated to be greater than that of any one of twenty-seven States of the Union. Of these two million or more inhabitants only about 50,000, of whom one-fourth are of American origin, may be considered civilized, and take part in the government.

Western Liberia Knows Little of Eastern Liberia

With a rainfall of nearly 150 inches, one of the heaviest in the world, as well as consistently high temperatures, Liberia's soil is productive, although so far its cultivation has been neglected. Each year, however, there is a fair sized export of cocoa, cotton, coffee, rice, palm oil, palm kernels and other products. Porter trains bring iron ore, gold, tin, copper, zinc, ivory, hides, and precious stones from the mountains back of the coast.

The little republic has hardly scratched the surface of its possibilities. Its interior is less accessible than is America, 4,000 miles away, due to lack of communication. It is as little known to Liberians themselves as it is to the world at large. Rivers are navigable for only a short distance from the coast, due to the rapids when the plateau region is reached. Along its 350 miles of coastline rough trails and small boats are used.

Liberians are friendly to Americans, as many of the high officials of the republic were born in this country, a few of them former slaves. The American spirit is strong in Liberia. The capital of the country, Monrovia, is named for the American President Monroe, while the traveler is likely to come upon a collection

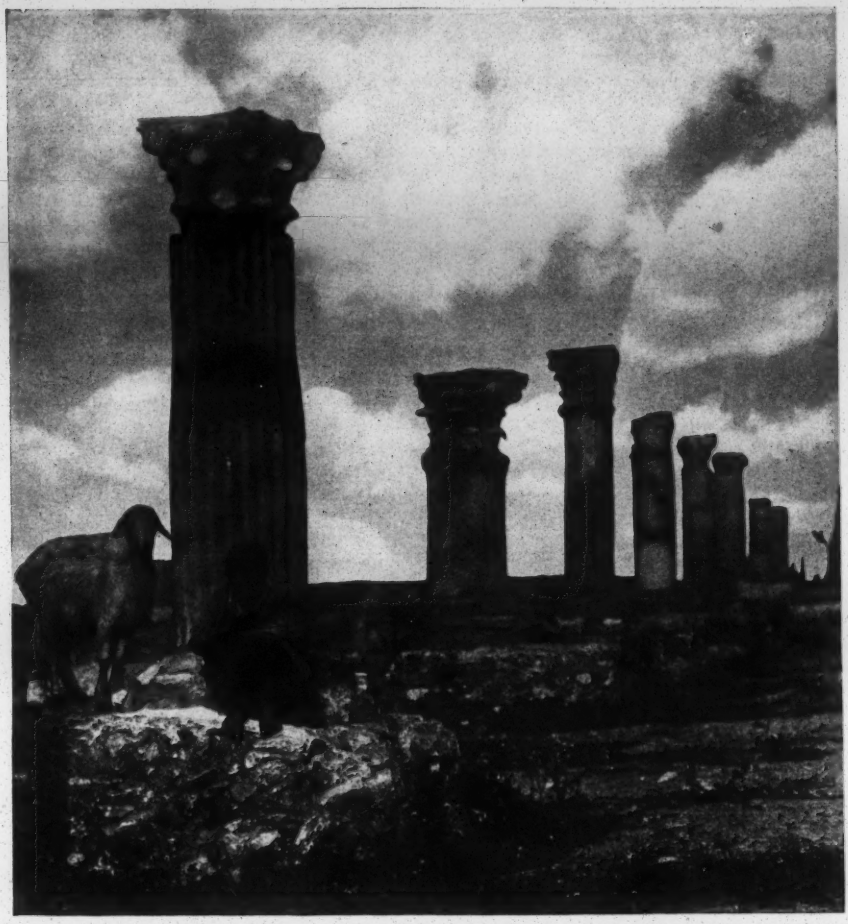
The export articles of the islands read like your itemized grocery bill: sugar, coffee, rice, bananas, lemons, oranges, grapes and nuts. Tobacco and millet also are produced. Plows are not widely used. Trees are suffering from giving too many goats too much liberty.

Name Recalls England's Claim

And, if further statistics are desired, the total area of the islands is 1,480 miles; their population 149,793 of whom but 4,799 are white.

The best natural harbor, on Maio, has a long Portuguese name, but is usually known as Porto Inglez, because the English maintained a foothold there until a century or more ago. The marriage contract of Portugal's princess, Catherine of Braganza, to England's monarch, Charles II, contained a clause upon which this claim was founded.

Bulletin No. 3, November 30, 1925.



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TENDING SHEEP AMONG THE LONELY COLUMNS OF CARTHAGE

Ancient Carthage has been the scene of important archaeological investigations in recent years. Jerba, where the sunken Grecian treasure ship is reported found, lies 200 miles farther east than Carthage, which is close to the city of Tunis. (See Bulletin No. 5).

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Jerba, New Center of Undersea Archaeology

UNDERWATER archaeology has boomed recently with the discovery of a submerged city in the Caspian Sea, the proposal of a motion picture company to drain Lake Nemi in Italy to retrieve the pleasure barges of Tiberius, and lastly the finding of a Greek treasure galley near the island of Jerba, off the coast of Tunisia.

The last has particular interest from the fact that tradition accepts Jerba as the home of the lotus-eaters who tempted Odysseus.

Most Residents Today Never Heard of Eaters of Lotus

The present day natives, mostly Berbers of the Kharijite sect, would probably tell you they have never heard of the fabled sweet forgetfulness that was said to come to the Lotophagi, as the eaters of the Lotus plant were called. There is nothing today about their busy little palm-shaded towns, or harbors full of fishing boats, to make it a port to be feared. Secure in their insularity against the attacks of nomadic Arabs, the Jerba islanders tend their fruit groves and vegetable gardens, vying also in industry with their kinsmen, the Mozabites, as traders to all the seaports of the Orient.

The sponge, polypus and other fisheries, and the oyster beds in the Canal d'Adjim, the ship channel through the narrow sweep of water that separates Jerba from the mainland, are productive. Every morning the queer looking craft of the Arab sponge fishermen put out from the long wharves, with flags flying, for the great stretches of shallow water that extend in all directions from the island. Large steamers must be met by native sailing craft and rowboats, as it is impossible for most of them to approach within two or three miles of the shore.

Has More Than a Million Date Palms

Jerba has been made, through the efforts of its inhabitants, one of the most fertile and prosperous spots along a great stretch of sun-baked Mediterranean coastline. More than a million date-palms wave their fringes over the white-roofed towns and villages of this island oasis, which is approximately twice as large as Malta, its British neighbor 250 miles to the northeast. In addition there are extensive groves of olive, orange, lemon and peach trees.

To the stranger coming from the bleak and parched Tunisian mainland this fertility seems a miracle. There are no rivers on Jerba, no streams worthy of the name even, and rainfall is as scant and infrequent as on the mainland. The answer to the riddle is underground water, obtained through artesian wells.

Many Reminders of Roman Rule

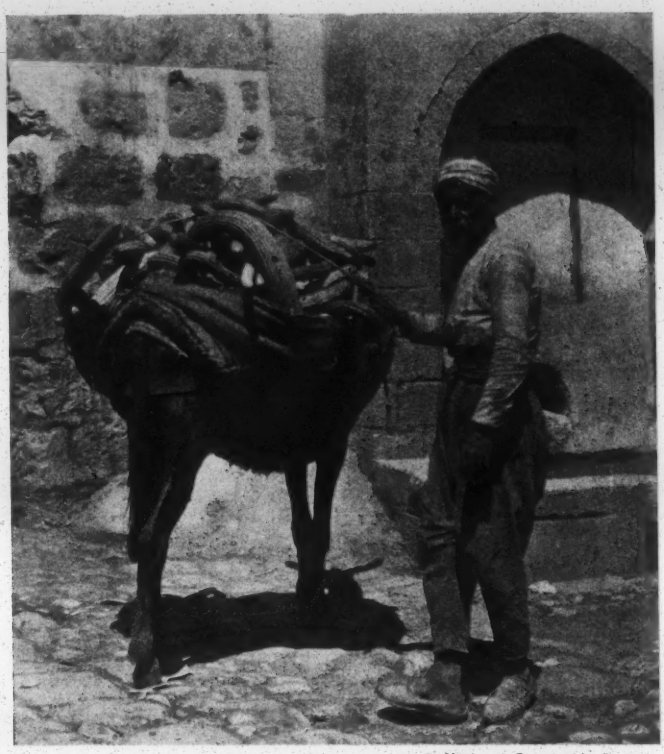
Humt-Suk, the capital and principal city, lies on the sandy north coast about half a mile from the sea and five miles from the anchorage of steamers. Its countless little buildings of one or two stories all have domes and from the roof tops the city looks like an array of inverted saucers, with the graceful minarets of the mosques breaking the skyline like slender lighthouses. Public gardens and a number of wide curving streets show the beneficent influence of the French. Down by the sea is the spot where a great mound of Christian bones, called "The Skull Fort," stood for centuries. The bones were those of several thousand Spaniards who were massacred by the pirate Dragut in 1560. They were collected and buried in the Christian cemetery nearby in 1848.

of huts or shanties in the midst of the African jungle with the incongruous names of New York, or Philadelphia, or Bunker Hill, or Latrobe, or Hartford—all of them actual Liberian settlements.

Southern Colonial Leading Style in Homes

The houses of the more well-to-do Liberians are built in the style of the Southern States, while much of the furniture, clothing and most of the books and papers are from the United States. Few of the natives have seen or ever expect to see the United States, but they like to feel, with a similar language, currency and customs, and a government modelled after ours, that they are still American.

More than twenty varieties of wild rubber vines and trees have already been found in the tropical wilderness that begins beyond the cleared areas. Liberia does not have a very extensive coastal plain, with the moist, preferably inundated, ground best suited for rubber cultivation, but in Ceylon, where conditions are similar, cultivated rubber trees are growing at altitudes up to 2,000 feet, and even higher. On a rubber plantation, the trees are usually planted in open rows, like fruit orchards, and in the early stages of their growth catch crops, such as peanuts, cassava, coffee, bananas, cotton, etc., are often set among them, with the idea of removing the catch crops later on. Thus a cotton, banana, or coffee estate can be gradually transformed into a rubber plantation as soon as it is certain the latter will pay.



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NATURE'S CANTEENS FOR SALE IN DAMASCUS

Cucumbers and other types of melons are prized in Damascus and other dry countries, because they help piece out a limited water supply. A food shortage has been feared in Damascus as a result of fighting between the French colonial troops and Moslem desert [illegible]s (See Bulletin No. 1).

All over the island are Roman ruins, decayed causeways, baths, temples—the subsoil of all the Mediterranean world. But aside from the mausoleum of Borgho nothing remains intact of this one-time important Roman colony, the birthplace of two Roman Emperors, Vibius Gallus and Volusenus.

What Did Homer Refer To?

Hara-Serira, a village of 1,500 inhabitants five miles south of the capital, is a resort of Jewish pilgrims from southern Tunisia and Tripolitania. The Gheriba, or synagogue, is built on the spot where, according to tradition, one of the tables of the law of Moses was found. It is much revered also by Catholics and Moslems. Not far away, at Gallala, is an unexploited Eden for photographers. This is the center of pottery-manufacturing, where all day long the statuesque native women, twentieth century Rebeccas, carry graceful white water-jugs to the stone-rimmed wells.

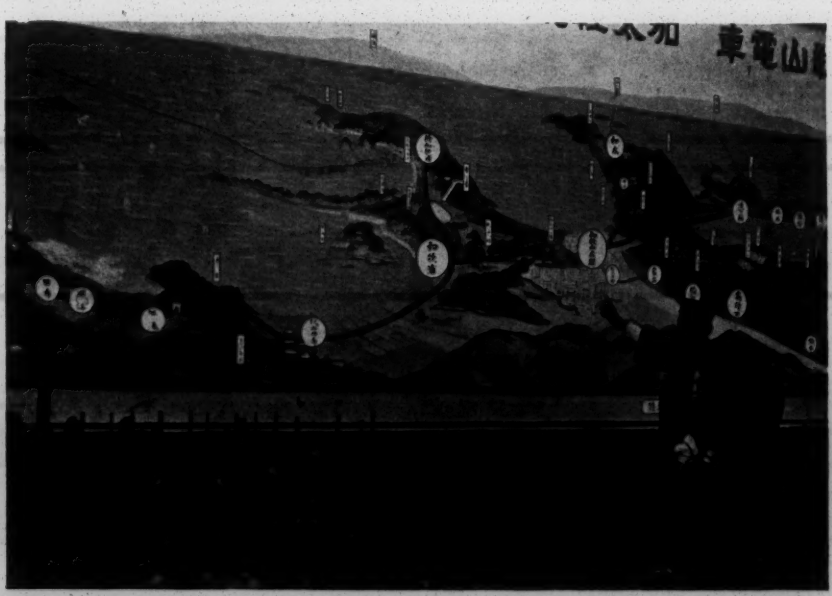
Of the lotus, or jujubier, as the French call it, there are few remnants. There has been much disagreement as to the identification of the Homeric lotus. Lotus is a popular name applied to several plants, and whether the one that the Greek poet had in mind was a tree, a bush, a flower, or the seed of any of them, has not been determined.

Lotus Unnecessary, Natives Say

One visitor was taken by a native guide far inland to see what the guide said was the only living specimen of the lotus on the island. It was a bush or vine, trained up the wall of an Arab house, shoulder-high and grew in stout, hardy stocks. It was almost leafless and bore no blossom.

Some of the natives contend, however, that the lotus has nothing to do with the stranger's forgetfulness of home. They point to the soft glow of the sunset on the white-domed houses and minarets, the rippling blue-green Mediterranean and the waving palm trees along the sandy shore.

Bulletin No. 5, November 30, 1925.



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BILL-BOARD ADVERTISING IN JAPAN

The picture map encourages one to go to Wakanaura, a popular seaside resort near Osaka. Japanese railroads are energetic in publicity campaigns. Neat bill-boards at nearly all stations also show the direction and distance of all places of interest from the local station (See Bulletin No. 2).